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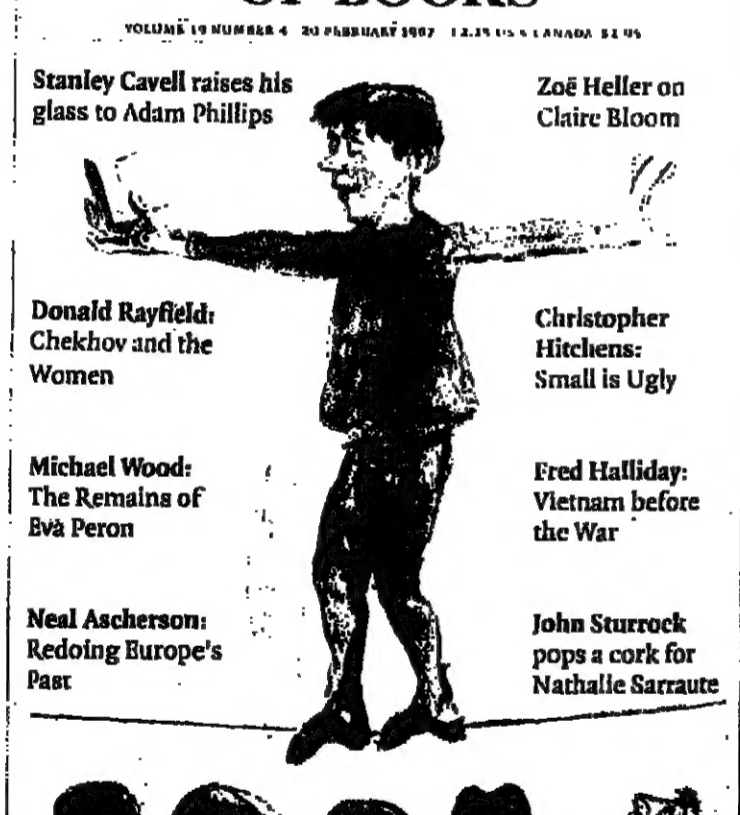
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Ronan Bennett: A Life's Life London Review OF BOOKS



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The Guardian Weekly

Vol 158, No 18
Week ending May 4, 1997

The Washington Post Le Monde

US presses Mobutu to go quietly

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg and agencies

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton's special envoy to Zaire, Bill Richardson, was due to meet President Mobutu Sese Seko on Tuesday to try to persuade him to accept the conditions for an orderly transition of power set by Laurent Kabila's rebels.

This would almost certainly involve a humiliating departure to his palace in northern Zaire, or his leaving the country altogether. Mr Richardson, who is Washington's ambassador to the United Nations, planned to fly on to rebel-held territory to meet Mr Kabila later. He said: 'The United States believes that there can be no military solution to the crisis, but rather a negotiated settlement leading to an inclusive transitional government and fair and free elections.'

Meanwhile the UN World Food Programme said on Monday it had found 6,000 or 7,000 of the 80,000 Rwandan refugees driven from their camps near Kisangani last week, and others were emerging from the forest. A team had come across the refugees about 40km from their camps.

The UN said that without help from the rebels to locate, gather and care for the refugees, Mr Kabila's insistence that they must all be repatriated within 60 days of May 1 was 'totally unrealistic'. Once they were gathered and cared for, the project would be 'do-able', a spokesman said.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, who flew to New York to brief the Security Council, expressed 'deep concern' about reports from a number of sources that abuses had been committed against the refugees.

Elsewhere in rebel-held territory, the UN Children's Fund said about 20 men in military uniform seized about 50 refugee children and some adults last Saturday from a hospital north of Bukavu, close to the Rwandan border, run by the British charity Save the Children.

'Judging from what we've heard,



A young Hutu refugee is weighed at an aid centre in Goma; many thousands more are missing in Zaire's forests. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN MOORE

I think it's unlikely that we're going to find these children alive,' a Unicef spokesman said. He said the hospital's director described the children being thrown or herded into trucks.

Mr Kabila bowed to pressure to allow international agencies to search for the missing refugees after the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, accused the rebels of 'slow extermination' by starvation. Mr

Kabila has denied that there is an organised campaign against Rwandan civilians.

The rebels accused Hutu extremists of forcing the refugees out to provide cover for attacks and to prevent their repatriation. But there is growing evidence that the rebels played a significant role in chasing the refugees from the camps.

Rebels prevented aid workers and journalists entering the camps

last week. By the time they were allowed in, four days later, the refugees were gone. And that visit was curtailed by gunfire, which the rebels blamed on militiamen but aid workers suspected was an attempt to manufacture an air of danger as an excuse to hustle the visitors away before they could inspect grave sites closely.

Zairean villagers accused the rebels of murdering hundreds of refugees and burying them with a bulldozer. They alleged that the massacre came after battles between the rebels and Hutu extremists.

Peter Kessler, a UN human rights spokesman based in Nairobi, said that the team found a fresh mound of soil in the camp, but did not have time to examine it.

The torment of the refugees, hiding in the dense forests has drained off the considerable goodwill the rebels have built up abroad by their rapid, relatively bloodless, sweep across Zaire. Mr Richardson's primary task is to ensure that Kinshasa does not become the exception to this rule by persuading Mr Mobutu to step aside.

On Monday government forces deserted the town of Kikwit, 400km east of Kinshasa, following reports that the rebels had taken Idiofa, 80km further east.

Kikwit, the centre of the 1995 Ebola virus outbreak, is the commercial capital of Bandundu province, which supplies most of Kinshasa's domestically produced food. Residents said the local authorities had asked the troops to lay down their arms.

Alex Dimal Smith in Washington adds: Three planes hired by the television evangelist Pat Robertson to fly emergency aid to Zaire in 1994 were used exclusively to get diamonds out of the country, their pilots told the Washington Post on Monday.

A spokesman for Mr Robertson at first denied the claim but later said the aircraft had turned out to be unsuitable for medical relief.

Washington Post, page 16

Liberals seek boost from Canadian poll

Howard Schneider in Toronto

CANADA'S prime minister, Jean Chrétien, took advantage this week of strong economic figures and a weak, divided opposition to call a federal election for June 2.

Only 34 years into his five-year mandate, Mr Chrétien decided to test his Liberal Party's record of reducing the federal deficit and increasing trade against persistent concern in the country about jobs and an unemployment rate of more than 9 per cent.

Speaking to reporters in Ottawa last Sunday, he said he was calling the election now because his party is 'ahead of schedule' in its drive for a balanced budget and he feels it is time to let Canadians pass judgment on that record.

The whirlwind 36-day campaign will be a test not only of the Liberals' economic record, but also of Mr Chrétien's ability to fend off largely regional challenges from four other parties, not least from the separatist Bloc Québécois in Quebec.

The Bloc holds 50 seats in parliament, enough to form the official opposition. The results in Quebec will set the stage for events leading up to another referendum, probably in 1999, on secession from Canada.

According to recent polls, none of the opposition parties stand much chance of ousting the Liberals, who hold 174 of the 295 seats in parliament. The most recent Angus Reid survey gave the Liberals 42 per cent support, while the Conservatives and Reform were roughly tied for second, both with less than 20 per cent. The New Democrats had about 11 per cent, while the single-province Bloc Québécois held about 50 per cent support within Quebec. - Washington Post

Hostages freed in daring Lima raid

EU backs down in row with Iran

UK child poverty worst in Europe

Shock artists too vulgar by half

McDonald's faces trial without jury

Austria	AS 30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF 75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK 16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E 500
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Election focus, pages 10-11

Labour plans to appoint minister for Europe

John Palmer in Brussels and Ian Black

BRITAIN'S Labour party plans to follow an election victory this week by appointing a minister for European Union affairs to take direct charge of negotiations for a new EU treaty.

The new minister - expected to be Joyce Quin, a former Labour member of the European Parliament - would replace the British ambassador to the EU, Sir Stephen Wall, as Britain's chief representative to the inter-governmental conference (IGC) that is reviewing the Maastricht treaty.

If Labour wins, she will fly to

Brussels on Monday with a public statement of co-operation and goodwill for Britain's EU partners.

Labour sources said this week the move was designed to underline the authority a new government hoped to command over Europe and to signal a more constructive contribution to the IGC.

But the new minister, whose appointment must be confirmed by Labour leader Tony Blair, would be subordinate to Robin Cook, who is expected to be Foreign Secretary.

If she is confirmed as European affairs minister, Ms Quin will tell the IGC that the Labour government wants to rejoin the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty as

quickly as is practical. Other EU member states will also be told that they can expect a marked shift in Britain's stance, moving away from confrontation and towards closer co-operation.

Mr Blair himself may not have long to wait before he meets all his fellow EU heads of government. In spite of Labour's public lack of enthusiasm for an early EU summit, the current Dutch EU presidency is pressing ahead with arrangements for a special leaders' meeting in Maastricht on May 23.

If elected, a Labour government is expected to agree to some modest expansion of majority vote decisions, a further restriction on the

use of the national veto, new legislative powers for the European Parliament, and a stronger commitment to employment, social standards and human rights in the treaty.

But EU governments know that a Labour government will take a virtually identical position to the Conservatives over moves to strengthen foreign, security and defence policy as well as the transfer to the EU of responsibility for external frontiers, immigration and asylum.

Public opinion polls in Britain put Labour on a clear course for victory in the May 1 general election. Tuesday's Gallup poll put Labour at 51 per cent, Conservatives at 29, and Liberal Democrats at 13, a 22-point lead for Labour.

